DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 399 414 CE 072 518

AUTHOR	Lankard, Bettina A.
TITLE	Acquiring Self-Knowledge for Career Development. ERIC Digest No. 175.
INSTITUTION	ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult, Career, and Vocational Education, Columbus, Ohio.
SPONS AGENCY	Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC.
REPORT NO	EDO-CE-96-175
PUB DATE	96
CONTRACT	RR93002001
NOTE	4p.
PUB TYPE	Information Analyses - ERIC Clearinghouse Products (071)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Career Development; Classroom Techniques; Cognitive Processes; Educational Assessment; Educational Practices; Elementary Secondary Education; Evaluation Methods; *Experiential Learning; Learning Activities; *Learning Strategies; Portfolio Assessment; Postsecondary Education; *Self Concept; Self Concept Measures; *Student Evaluation; *Teaching Methods
IDENTIFIERS	ERIC Digests

ABSTRACT

Learners of all ages need to expand their self-knowledge and determine the ways their interests and abilities are applicable in the changing social, economic, and work environments. Many of the new ways of teaching and learning offer processes by which students can gain experiences that enhance their self-knowledge. These varied learning processes include brain-based learning and problem-based learning. Educational methods such as performance-based instruction with criterion-referenced evaluation components, assessments using performance tests and authentic assessments, or documentation of performance through career passports and portfolios also contribute to self-awareness. Self-knowledge requires reflection on what was learned through these processes and what needs to be learned, the process by which learning occurred, and how that learning has enhanced what the student knows about him/herself in relation to work. Journal writing is a useful technique to stimulate reflections throughout the learning process. Whether through experiential, on-the-job, classroom, or community and service learning, students can enhance their awareness of themselves and their career development by continually summarizing for reflecting upon what they are learning as they continue their progression through school and work. (KC)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 399 414

Acquiring Self-Knowledge for Career Development
ERIC Digest No. 175

Bettina A. Lankard

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult, Career, and Vocational Education
Center on Education and Training for Employment
College of Education
The Ohio State University
1900 Kenny Road
Columbus, OH 43210-1090

CE072518

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

DIGEST NO. 175

ERIC CELEBRATING 30 YEARS - 1966-1996
Clearinghouse on Adult, Career, and Vocational Education

by Bettina A. Lankard

1996

EDO-CE-96-175

Acquiring Self-Knowledge for Career Development

Do people ever know enough about themselves to determine the direction of their career journey? Various strategies have been developed to provide guidance toward this end; however, as the realities of work change due to such factors as global competition and new technologies, it is necessary to develop new awareness of self in relation to work. This *Digest* examines various processes by which learners of all ages, elementary to adult, can expand their self-knowledge—their interests and the importance of those interests to their personal satisfaction, their strength and weaknesses in relation to their interests, and the ways in which their interests and abilities are applicable in the changing social, economic, and work environments.

Self-knowledge is the first of three integral competency areas in the National Career Development Guidelines (National Occupational Information Coordinating Committee 1989). The guidelines address the progressive acquisition throughout life of (1) knowledge of the influence of a positive self-concept; (2) skills to interact positively with others; and (3) understanding of the impact of growth and development. Studies conducted by Anderson (1995) and DaGiau (1995) among others demonstrate the influence that increased understanding of one's self-concept and its effect on roles and relationships has upon career maturity. According to Anderson (1995), "self-knowledge is a domain with many pathways" (p. 280). Historical self-knowledge—understanding of past experiences and influences that led to one's current level of development—is a key to shaping the future.

Ask any first-time job seeker the main reason employers rejected them and they will tell you "lack of experience." Although this may seem unfair to the student who has worked hard in school, it should not be a surprise that employers value experienced workers. Experience is integral to knowing and understanding oneself and how one relates to different situations, circumstances, and roles.

Experiential Methods for Acquiring Self-Knowledge

Many of the new ways of teaching and learning offer processes by which students can gain experiences that enhance their self-knowledge. One of these is *problem-based learning*, an instructional model based on constructivism, the concept that learners construct their own understanding by relating concrete experience to existing knowledge; processes of collaboration and reflection are involved. In problem-based learning, students are presented with an ill-structured problem—one that has no obvious solution and for which problem-solvers cannot be certain they have the right answer. The problem must be content relevant and represent a real situation faced by an individual, group, company, or community. Solving the problem takes students through the following processes (Savoie and Hughes 1994):

- *Engagement.* Problem-based learning requires students to self-direct their search for a solution, often by assuming the role of a key actor in the problem situation, e.g., a lawyer, an environmentalist, a statistician, and so forth.
- *Inquiry.* Students brainstorm with others and gather information from multiple sources.
- *Solution Building.* Students work in teams discussing alternatives and examining possible solutions.
- *Debriefing and Reflection.* Students share information, opinions, and ideas with others based on what they have learned through experience.
- *Presentation of Findings.* Students write plans, reports, and other forms of work documentation to include in their portfolios of accomplishments and achievements.

Since students are the real problem solvers, their experiences in the process broaden their understanding, not only of the complexities of the problem, but of the effect a given solution might have on various stakeholders. Through such experiences, students learn to assess their own stances on the issues in question, their specific interests in the issues, their abilities in relation to the tasks of problem solving, and the appeal of various jobs dedicated to those issues. In a society where change is constant and teamwork is a way of life at work, the lessons learned through involvement in problem-based learning are essential for students' career development.

Another process that can help students enhance their self-knowledge is that of *brain-based learning*, which moves the learner from memorizing information to meaningful learning. Through instruction that incorporates the principles of brain-based learning, students are led to comprehend and draw upon the "vastness, complexity, and potential of the human brain" (Caine and Caine 1990, p. 66). For example, understanding the effects of physiology on learning, the importance of both focused attention and peripheral per-

ception on learning, and the relation between emotions and learning can help individuals better understand how to enhance their learning. For example, a worker who recognizes that stress is inhibiting work performance is more likely to engage in stress management techniques as a means of improving performance.

New methods of *performance assessment* can also contribute to students' self-knowledge in relation to career development. "Chief among these trends are educators' efforts to assess active learning and to base assessments on clearly defined standards. . . . Rather than assess student learning about history, math, or language, students write, debate, create problems, conduct experiments, and so on" (Willis 1996, p. 4). Engaging students in applying knowledge and skills in the same way they are performed in the real world enables students to reap the benefits of "authentic assessment." Authentic assessment provides students with expectations about what will be assessed as well as standards to be met in realistic contexts and gives students information about where they are in relation to where they need to be.

Performance assessments may also be based on criterion-referenced tests that enable students to compare their performance with clearly defined learning tasks or skill levels. Ohio's Competency Analysis Profiles (OCAPs) and ACT's Work Keys are examples of performance standards by which students can assess themselves in relation to those skills and abilities identified as necessary by expert workers in given occupational areas.

Portfolio assessment has become integral to instruction in the evolving learner-centered classroom. The portfolio concept is one way to help educators meet this challenge, giving students ownership of their work and establishing the standards by which they will be measured. "Through portfolios, students compose a portrait of themselves as able learners, selecting and presenting evidence that they have met the learning standards for individual classes and for broader tasks" (Lester and Perry 1995, p. 1). In collecting information for the portfolio, students should be alert to including informal and well as formal feedback about their performance. Documentation of relevant personal information, educational history, skills, and a cumulative record of assessments and career and job experiences should be an integral part of the career portfolio through such techniques as the Individual Career Plans and the Career Passport.

The use of inventories as a way to assess personality in relation to occupational interests is promoted by Lock (1996). Inventories such as the Six Holland Personality Environment Types, the Strong Interest Inventory and Career Assessment Inventory, and the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator can provide students with information about their personality, learning style, and their preferences in the world of work.

Whether through the varied learning processes (brain-based learning, problem-based learning), educational methods (performance-based instruction with criterion-referenced evaluation components), assessments (performance tests, authentic assessments), or documentation of performance (career passports, portfolios), self-knowledge requires reflection on what was learned and what needs to be learned, the process by which learning occurred, and how that learning has enhanced what the student knows about him/herself in relation to work. Journal writing is a useful technique to stimulate reflections throughout the learning process. Because reflection can provide valuable insights for their career development, students should be encouraged to allow time to reflect upon the activities in which they have been engaged and record their feelings, impressions, interests, and any new awareness they have acquired.

Today, many educational approaches emphasize the importance of having students take charge of their own learning. The processes for acquiring self-knowledge described here are consistent with that emphasis. Whether through experiential, on-the job, classroom, or community/service learning, students can enhance their awareness of themselves and their career development by continually summarizing for reflecting upon what they are learning as they continue their progression through school and work.

References

Anderson, K. J. "The Use of a Structured Career Development Group to Increase Career Identity." ***Journal of Career Development*** 21, no. 4 (Summer 1995): 279-291. (EJ 504 417)

Caine, R. N., and Caine G. "Understanding a Brain-based Approach to Learning and Teaching." ***Educational Leadership*** 48, no. 2 (October 1990): 66-70. (EJ 416 439)

DaGiau, B. J. "Characteristics of Seventh-Grade Students Who Completed a Course in Adolescent Development Compared to Students that Have Not Completed the Course." Master's thesis, William Paterson College, 1995. (ED 386 609)

Lester, J. S., and Perry, N. S. ***Assessing Career Development with Portfolios. ERIC Digest.*** Greensboro, NC: ERIC Clearinghouse on Counseling and Student Services, 1995. (ED 391 110)

Lock, R. D. ***Taking Charge of Your Career Direction: Career Planning Guide, Book 1. 3d ed.*** Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole, 1996.

National Occupational Information Coordinating Committee. ***National Career Development Guidelines.*** Portland, OR: Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 1989. (ED 317 874-880)

Savoie, J. M., and Hughes, A. S. "Problem-based Learning as Classroom Solution." ***Educational Leadership*** 52, no. 3 (November 1994): 54-57. (EJ 492 914)

Willis, S. "On the Cutting Edge of Assessment: Testing What Students Can Do with Knowledge." ***Education Update: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development*** 38, no. 4 (June 1996): 4-7.

Developed with funding from the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education, under Contract No. RR93002001. Opinions expressed do not necessarily reflect the position or policies of OERI or the Department. ***Digests*** may be freely reproduced.

CENTER ON EDUCATION AND TRAINING FOR EMPLOYMENT
THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY
1900 KENNY ROAD • COLUMBUS, OHIO 43210